

Division of Senior and Disability Services Update
Statewide Public Health Meeting
August 28-29, 2018

SBAR (State-wide Bedbug Prevention and Remediation)

- 1. Situation: (Brief description of the current issue or situation requiring project/program)**

Reports of bed bugs are on the rise. Missouri Department of Health and Senior Service (DHSS) Central Registry Unit and DHSS local field staff are receiving more and more telephone calls with the complaint of bed bugs. Remediation of infestation is costly and out of the question for our most vulnerable citizens. DHSS is limited to only offering educational assistance. Additionally, DHSS employees and partner agencies work directly in infested homes and risk spreading bed bugs to their homes and work places.

There is no known concerted and comprehensive approach for seeking and receiving assistance for bed bug prevention and infestation remediation. .

- 2. Background: (Relevant background data about current situation and current and past approaches to the situation)**

As of January 2017, a task force has been established by DHSS in Southeastern MO, covering New Madrid, Dunklin and Pemiscot Counties. The task force was initiated to establish a concerted and comprehensive response to bed bug prevention and infestation. The task force examines the role that community stakeholders are currently playing to educate Missourians about prevention as well as identifying available resources to remedy an infestation. The task force is composed of a variety of stakeholders including DHSS staff, in-home service providers, local health departments, local housing authorities, Area Agencies on Aging, Kennett School District staff, and other state government departments, and meets every other month. The Division of Senior and Disability Services (DSDS) has supplied a facilitator to lead the task force. The facilitator meets with the task force members every other month to develop plans, provide information, and facilitator problem solving sessions.

The bed bug task force has created a webpage and a brochure dedicated to informing the public about bed bugs. At present, the brochure is only available in English. The webpage and brochure can be viewed at <http://www.health.mo.gov/bedbugs>. DHSS staff have attended environmental health conferences and visited with local health departments to educate on the problem.

Dunklin County Housing Authority has successfully used heat treat machines to treat housing units. Initially, the task force was pursuing a plan to use the machines to treat private homes and other non-Housing Authority units. The service was to be offered at a cost lower than the cost of a private exterminator; an amount that would cover time and the cost of maintaining existing equipment and purchasing additional machines. Subsequent to initial planning and ideas, the task force learned that the equipment possessed by the housing authority can only be used to service housing authority apartments.

For the 2018 – 2019 school year, the Kennett School district plans to distribute bed bug brochures during the back to school open house meetings.

3. Assessment: (Your assessment about the situation and description of project or program that might address the situation.)

Presently, the problem has not been quantified, with no known data attempts to measure the magnitude of the problem. However, it is known that the issue is a state-wide issue and not confined to the southeastern portion of the state. All fifteen of the original task force members, composed of DHSS employees and members of the local communities, shared that they encountered bed bugs in their official capacity. Likewise, DHSS staff have received reports and have reported encounters with the problem in other regions of the state.

The literature on bed bugs suggests that the most effective means of combatting bed bugs is heat treatment; heat is the only method that will kill all stages of bed bug development. In the identified counties (Pemiscot, Dunkin, and New Madrid), the housing authority is the only entity within the task force that has heat treat machines. As stated above, the equipment can only be used to service housing authority units.

Members of the existing task force have identified the spread of the problem is likely worsened by the purchase of infested furniture from second-hand shops and retrieval and usage of discarded, infested furniture. This must be further investigated and policy needs to be developed to prevent the spread of bed bugs through this manner.

The cost to control bed bugs is expensive; prices range from hundreds to thousands of dollars for treatment, depending upon the method. Likewise, treatment often requires several repeat visits, especially when using pesticide treatment, and continual monitoring for bed bugs after treatment to ensure that the problem is arrested.

4. Recommendation/ Request: (policy, personnel, other resources needed to accomplish the project or program)

To be successful, task forces or similar mechanisms will need to be present in other parts of the state; no area within the state should be left unprotected. As the effort moves into urban areas, educational materials will need to be translated into languages other than English to reach non-English speaking populations. Likewise, some persons affected by bed bugs may not have access to a computer, may not be computer savvy, may have difficulty reading, or may not be literate. As such, other means of communicating, i.e., video and audio media, will need to be produced.

Since bed bugs are an issue that impacts all parts of the state, education and remediation efforts need to extend beyond the current focus area, i.e., southeastern Missouri. This may require additional task forces or partnership efforts to be established in other regions of the state, as well as someone to facilitate these efforts. Future coordination and facilitation efforts may require a dedicated person(s) to concentrate solely on this issue.

It is assumed that local stakeholders are best situated to understand and deal with the problem as it presents locally. Some areas may have resources to deal with the problem; however, there is no sole point of contact or coordinated effort in getting information about bed bug prevention and/or resources for dealing with the issue.

No funding at any level (federal, state, or local) or from any known source (private or public) has been identified to produce educational materials or provide assistance for person needing financial aid to deal with treating infestation.

